

Employee burnout from office politics business essay



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Politics is the art of looking for trouble, finding it whether it exists or not, diagnosing it incorrectly, and applying the wrong remedy — Ernest Benn

This paper is an effort to explore the workplace situations wherein people find themselves to be caught by office politics and how the people who worry about workplace rejection or sabotage can end up bringing it upon themselves.

In the first part of the paper, made an effort to unveil conditions, situations and purposes that drive employees to get into politics (precisely to understand the meaning of it in organizational setup). Followed by adverse effect on altogether organizational culture for instance Common observation says that individuals who play politics at the workplace pay less attention to their work. They are more interested in leg pulling and back biting. They spend most of their times criticizing their fellow workers. As a result of politics at the workplace, employees fail to achieve targets within the stipulated time frame. Work gets delayed in such an organization.

The third part of paper count upon certain plans and policies which are needed to improve upon work culture, on organizational perspective and Employee attitude on Individual perspective, so that talent could be sustained and direct towards organizational growth and effective engagement.

Keywords: Employee Burnout, Office Politics, Political Behaviour,

INTRODUCTION

The definition of office politics may be a bit ambiguous, but wherever you find human beings in an office environment, you're bound to have office politics. They're used to gain power in the workplace, or by many accounts, misused. Their competitive nature can be used in a positive sense, but office politics can also be damaging to employee morale.

Office politics can be difficult to define, but one thing is certain: there's no getting around them. For some, mastering office politics is the key to their careers. Others would like to avoid them altogether. And the impact on employee morale, depending on whom you ask, can range from favorable to fatal.

Wherever you have a group of people you will have a degree of politics operating. People will usually jockey for position, form alliances, decide who they do like and who they don't! People will come to the group with different personalities, sets of values and opinions. Over time a group develops a set of norms or standards and ways of working. They develop a pecking order – a hierarchy of status and influence. This will not necessarily reflect the organisation chart.

Political behaviour is also likely to arise whenever many non programmed decisions needs to be made. Non programmed- decision situation involves ambiguous circumstances that allow ample opportunity for political maneuvering.

CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POLITICAL BEHAVIOUR

Ambiguous Goals-----Personal Gain Disguised as
pursuit of Goals

Scarce Resource-----Pursuit of Maximum Share of
Resource

Technology and Environment -----Personal Gains via Uncertainty

Non programmed Decision-----Parochial Decision Making

Organizational Change-----Pursuit of Political Ends during
Reorganization.

In today's corporate scenario what power tactics do people use to translate power bases into specific action is what opinion do individual have for influencing their bosses, coworkers or employees. And are some of these options more effective than others? Here we review popular tactical options and the conditions under which one may be more effective than other.

RESEARCH HAS IDENTIFIED NINE DISTINCT INFLUENCE TACTICS:

Legitimacy: Relying on one's authority position or stressing that a request is in accordance with organizational policies or rules.

Rational Persuasion: Presenting logical arguments and factual evidence to demonstrate that a request is reasonable.

Inspirational Appeals: Developing emotional commitments by appealing to a target's values, needs, hopes and aspirations.

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Consultation: Increasing the target's motivation and support by involving him or her in deciding how the plan or change will be accomplished.

Exchange: Rewarding the target with benefits or favor in exchange for following a request.

Personal Appeals: Asking for compliance based on friendship or loyalty.

Ingratiation: Using flattery, praise, or friendly behavior prior to making a request.

Pressure: Using warnings, repeated demands, and threats.

Coalitions: Enlisting the aid of other people to persuade the target of using the support of others as a reason for the target to agree.

A behavior that one person labels as " Organizational politics" is very likely to be characterized as an instance of " Effective Management" by another. The fact is not that effective management is necessarily political, although in some cases it might be rather, a person's reference point determines what he or she classifies as organizational politics. Take a look at the following labels used in describe the same phenomenon. These suggest that politics like beauty is in the eye of beholder.

“ POLITICAL” LABELS VS. “ EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT” LABELS

Blaming others Vs. Fixing responsibility

Kissing up Vs. Developing working relationship

Apple polishing Vs. Demonstrating loyalty

Passing the buck Vs. Delegating authority

Covering your rear Vs. Documenting decision

Creating conflict Vs. Encouraging change and innovation.

Forming Coalition Vs. Facilitating teamwork

Whistle-blowing Vs. Improving efficiency

Scheming Vs. Planning Ahead

Overachieving Vs. Competent and capable

Ambitious Vs. Career minded

Opportunistic Vs. Astute

Cunning Vs. Practical minded

Arrogant Vs. Confident

Perfectionist Vs. Attentive to detail.

Barkha loves her job as a writer on a weekly television comedy series but hates the internal politics. “ A couple of the writers here spend more time kissing up to the executive producer than doing any work. And our head writer clearly has his favorites. While they pay me a lot and I get to really use my creativity, I’m sick of having to be on alert on back stabbers and constantly having to self-promote my contribution. I’m tired of doing most of the work and getting little of the credit.

Are Barkha’s comments typical of people who work in highly politicized workplaces? We all know of friend or relatives who regularly complain about the policies at their job. But how do people in general react to organizational politics? lets look at the evidence.

As per a survey published by HR Reporter on 31st Aug, 2012 edition, says one half of the employees participate in the office politics.

Politics may be better left outside of the office, according to a new Robert Half survey. More than one-half (56 per cent) of employees have observed political maneuverings on the job. Chief among these activities is gossiping and spreading rumors (54 per cent), followed by flattering the boss to gain favors (20 per cent) and taking credit for others’ work (17 per cent), found the survey of 700 workers in Canada and the United States.

Four in 10 (40 per cent) workers say they participate in office politics only when it pertains to issues that affect them directly. Another 39 per cent said they are neutral parties who stay completely out of the fray. But 14 per cent said they are active in office politics because it’s important for them in getting ahead, found the survey.

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Robert Half offers six tips for navigating office politics:

- Build a broad coalition of support. In an effort to impress your company's power players, don't overlook those at the grassroots level. Lobby for the respect and trust of all your colleagues. Forge strong alliances by sharing credit for successes and delivering on your promises. You never know whose endorsement or vote of confidence could benefit your career in the future.
- Avoid smear campaigns. Gossiping or outright mudslinging is only guaranteed to damage one person's credibility. When you're upset or frustrated, wait until after you've calmed down to express your concerns. Be direct but tactful, focusing on facts rather than feelings.
- Stay true to your values. It's an unfortunate truth that there are those who'll do anything to "win," but character and credibility count. You don't need to play underhanded games to rise through the ranks.
- Connect with your constituencies. Smart candidates tailor their message and approach to the audience. Apply the same tactic to your co-workers; observe their unique work styles, priorities and communication preferences, and be willing to adapt your approach.
- Play by the rules. Seemingly minor slipups can have big implications on the campaign trail and at work. Avoid sticky situations by paying close attention to office protocol at your firm. If you take a misstep, make amends quickly.
- Dodge controversy. Given that 2012 is a big election year, water cooler chitchat will inevitably veer toward the polarizing topic of politics. Proceed

with caution (or politely bow out completely). Getting into heated debates about non-work issues can generate unnecessary ill will.

MANIPULATE POLITICS AT WORK

“ Becoming embroiled in office politics is never a good career move, but it’s wise to be aware of political undercurrents on the job because they do exist in most organizations,” said Max Messmer, chairman and CEO of Robert Half International. “ There are people who seek to get ahead in their careers at the expense of others, and this behaviour erodes trust and undermines team morale.” The conflict of different ideas, different personalities and an overall competitive atmosphere seems to cultivate office politics. It is a part of every organization and usually the bigger the organization the bigger the office drama becomes.

Employees who do not believe in working hard depend on nasty politics to make their position secure at the workplace. Employees play politics simply to come in the limelight and gain undue attention and appreciation from the seniors. Politics refers to irrational behavior of the individuals at the workplace to obtain advantages which are beyond their control. No body has ever gained anything out of politics; instead it leads to a negative ambience at the workplace.

Sometimes, when a leader chooses an unqualified person to head a position in the office, it is not because the person is the sharpest tool in the box, but sometimes it is because the leader needs someone he or she can control. Team work in any establishment is very vital, but if leaders keep showing

favoritism and the likes; it destroys team work and this will definitely affect the company too.

Workplace politics is not new, particularly in countries like India and tragedy is that most of the time “ HR Department” is a center of such activities. Anyone who has ever had any job, anywhere, knows that the dynamics among those who are part of the work environment play an important part in how a business is run. Apparently office politics is an increasing problem according to a study by Accountemps. “ Eighteen percent of an administrator’s time — more than nine weeks out of every year — is spent resolving conflicts among employees” (“ Surviving Office Politics.” Talent Scout. April 16, 1998).

People often play office politics because they are unsure about their own abilities and achievements. They try to conceal what they believe are their shortcomings behind a façade and to make others feel they are less worthy. Don’t let them undermine your self-esteem – be proud of your own accomplishments and make sure that your efforts are recognized by those who matter. But don’t get into direct competition if you can avoid it – it’s a waste of your time! If people know you are doing a good job consistently there is far less opportunity for you to be undermined. Forming alliances with senior managers and using them as sponsors and champions for your work can increase your own informal power. If you have a formal sponsor, make sure they are well informed and really up to date with your project or program and can talk about it fluently to their colleagues. As with all stakeholder management – targeted communication of good quality of information is the key to you and your project or programmer’s success.

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Management can address office politics, consequently boosting employee morale, in a number of ways. First, performance at the workplace must be stressed. There is no clearer indication of office politics than a blatant underperformer being recognized. Employees must be rewarded based on their achievements, not as payback or as favors.

Office politics can never be avoided as long as human beings are involved. Everyone that has worked in an organization can tell you that office politics exists and there is little or nothing that anyone can do about it. Some people will suggest that, if you can't beat them, join them.

Office politics no doubt can affect an employee's work performance because if an employee feels that no matter how hard he works, he will never receive recognition for his hard work just because he not in the good graces of his line manager. So he comes to work and does not put in the extra effort to ensure that the organization grows. This in turn may affect the organization's financial turnover and this may lead to layoffs.

Most managers are clear on their responsibilities in regard to people, process and products/services. Many, however, are less clear in facilitating the intangibles of office politics that provide the framework for different perceptions that influence organizational behavior. These perceptions often facilitate a climate of ambiguity among the people who work in an organization, where the facts are often not supported by clear evidence. As a result, employees are left to convert their perception into some defined meaning – often a breeding ground for conflict, competition and misunderstanding of facts, intentions and reality.

Office politics can create a climate where people are motivated to use whatever influence they have to taint the facts in a favorable light that supports their personal interests or even goals.

Individual political agendas can result in a person – without having all the facts – justifying their attitudes, beliefs and behaviors to try to prove their point of view. Unfortunately, there are times when these actions can be damaging to others, especially when individuals present only their point of view and have no concern for other perceptions or circumstances. Managers understand there is often no escaping office politics, and research suggests not paying attention to or dismissing their importance is often at their own risk. For example, unmanaged politics can negatively impact both personal and career satisfaction. Each individual in an organization comes with a different set of values, goals and experiences that if not aligned can lead to conflict. Organizations don't have unlimited resources, so decisions as to how things will be done unfortunately are not always made with all the facts. Managers are more effective when they don't make assumptions and are committed to getting facts from all parties involved, as they know political agendas sometimes drive behavior. Office politics can be complex to navigate. For example, organizational standards are based on facts that are often open to interpretation. Consider how one employee can believe their actions equal top performance while another may define their performance as average. This occurs because of conflicting definitions based on different values and beliefs. One of the negative consequences of employee engagement is office politics that result in increased job anxiety, stress and

turnover, as well as decreased job satisfaction and performance. The sad reality is many employees are afraid to act.

ORGANIZATION'S PERFORMANCE HAMPERED BY OFFICE POLITICS?

DECREASE IN OVERALL PRODUCTIVITY

Politics lowers the output of an individual and eventually affects the productivity of the organization. Common observation says that individuals who play politics at the workplace pay less attention to their work. They are more interested in leg pulling and back biting. They spend most of their times criticizing their fellow workers. As a result of politics at the workplace, employees fail to achieve targets within the stipulated time frame. Work gets delayed in such an organization.

AFFECTS CONCENTRATION

Individuals find it difficult to concentrate on their work. They are more interested in spoiling the other person's image in front of the superiors. An individual involved in politics is bound to make more mistakes as his focus is somewhere else.

SPOILS THE AMBIENCE

Politics leads to a negative environment at the workplace. It spoils the relationships amongst individuals. An individual playing politics at the organization is disliked by all.

CHANGES THE ATTITUDE OF EMPLOYEES

Politics changes the attitude of the employees. Even the serious employees lose interest in work and attend office just for the sake of it. Internal politics
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do not allow employees to give their hundred percent at work. No matter how much hard work an employee puts in, it goes unnoticed in a politically driven organization.

DEMOTIVATED EMPLOYEES

A non performer can be the apple of his boss's eye simply due to politics, thus demotivating the performers. Discussions are essential at the workplace to extract the best out of employees. Evaluating the pros and cons of an idea always helps in the long run. Employees playing politics always look for an opportunity to tarnish the image of the fellow workers. Employees feel demotivated when they are not rewarded suitably or someone who has not worked hard gets the benefits due to mere politics.

INCREASES STRESS

It is rightly said that problems evaporate if discussed. Individuals find it difficult to confide in any of their fellow workers due to the fear of secrets getting leaked. Politics increases the stress level of the employees.

Individuals are not machines who can work continuously for 8-9 hours without talking to others. It is important to have friends at the workplace who help you when needed. Hence Individuals fail to trust each other.

WRONG INFORMATION

Employees indulged in politics manipulate information and it is never passed on in its desired form. Superiors get a wrong picture of what is actually happening in the organization. A wrong person walks away with the credit in an organization where employees are indulged in politics.

CONCLUSION

Besides causing problems for the individuals who work together, the end result can be far more devastating. Employees and managers who must concentrate on the political aspects of work may have less time to pay attention their jobs. This translates into financial loss, which may in turn translate into job loss.

Some leaders take the highroad and hope that it will work itself out.

Unfortunately, by doing nothing it can have a great impact on office morale as well as the business results. Research tells us that managers believe that an increase in office politics is one of the greatest sources of their stress. Recent studies have also told us that 18% of management time is spent resolving conflicts among employees.

When employees are in conflict over things such as the way a procedure will be executed or use of a tool, there is a greater chance that they are going to take their eye off customers and prospects. Office politics can also have an impact on innovation. Innovation is fostered by new ideas that often come from employees. A business with a lot of office politics often means that employees will be scared to challenge, bring up new ideas or debate issues. Therefore, the innovation will be less. As you can see, office politics are more than just gossip. It can have an impact on your business. The good news is that it can be diminished through powerful leadership and open communication throughout the organization.

Office politics in its crudest form usually occurs when one, or more than one, person holds (or is seen as holding) a significant amount of power within the

office. This may be formal power or informal power. Formal power is pretty easy to read. Informal power is much more difficult. Informal power can arise in a number of ways! Someone with depth of knowledge of the organisation, the key subject matter expert, PAs to top managers, may all wield considerable power and they are fairly easy to discover. Far more challenging are the 'office bully', those in a relationship with someone holding formal power and unscrupulous players of the office politics' game. You need to listen and observe the group you work with and its surrounding organisation to find out more about these!

What can you do? Try to get to know the politically powerful within your organisation. Don't be afraid of them – they are often much, more receptive to people who aren't intimidated by them! Make sure they understand what you are trying to achieve. Deal with their reservations and make sure they understand that you are taking on board their views. If someone does try to undermine you, don't get drawn in. Simply be bold and assertive, but not aggressive. Make your points clearly and offer good will. If their negative behaviour persists, then ring fence them – make sure they have as little as possible to do with your work.